The effect of all this upon the politics of Europe was like that of a torch in dead stubble. The German-Roman Empire was an antiquated institution. Prussia had risen to importance as the representative of a new Protestant German nationality. Frederick the Great, inheriting his shrewd father's army and policy, thoroughly understood that for the attainment of this end Roman Catholic Austria must be humbled and reduced to a secondary position. His success was only partial, but it was so far effective. The relations between these two great rivals in the Germanic body, therefore, were so strained that Prussia, in her antagonism to Austria, naturally leaned toward France. But the seizure of German lands not only on the west bank of the Rhine, but of some even on the eastern side, together with the behavior of the French armies not only in southwestern Germany, but again in Bern, created consternation at Berlin. Sieyes was sent to allay, if possible, the fears of Frederick William III, and to woo him to the French alliance. Meantime, the radical Directory, looking on the ecclesiastical principalities of the empire as anachronisms, had been planning their entire secularization. This would indemnify the secular powers; and the sentiment of both Prussia and Austria favored this solution of the problem. But Bonaparte, foreseeing that temporarily it would also unify public opinion in Germany, and give France no ground for meddling, had declared in Italy that if the Germanic body were non-existent, France should create it for her own purposes; and he impressed upon the French plenipotentiaries at Rastadt how important it was that they should at least prevent a complete secularization of the great bishoprics.

This was the first bone of contention thrown into that Congress; and Austria soon began to see that the treaty of Campo Fonnio was to be not merely an armistice,